

An essay

on

Cholera Infantum.

by

Samuel Pleasonton,

of

Delaware.

1825.

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Cholera Infantum

Considering the great number of Infants, who yearly fall victims, to Cholera Infantum, in the principal Cities of the United States, the medical writers of this country, have been singularly silent on the subject; and those who have ventured, hold, for the most part, very contradictory opinions, as regards its pathology, and mode of treatment.

Were but a small portion of the experience of our able practitioners, relative to the preservative, and curative, treatment, of this very terrifying disease recorded, the young practitioners would doubtless be placed in possession of the most valuable information, and thus thousands of victims, might be snatched from an untimely grave, — But as such contributions are not to be met

1840

I have been thinking of you very much lately
and wondering how you are getting on
I hope you are well and happy
I have been very busy lately
but I have not forgotten you
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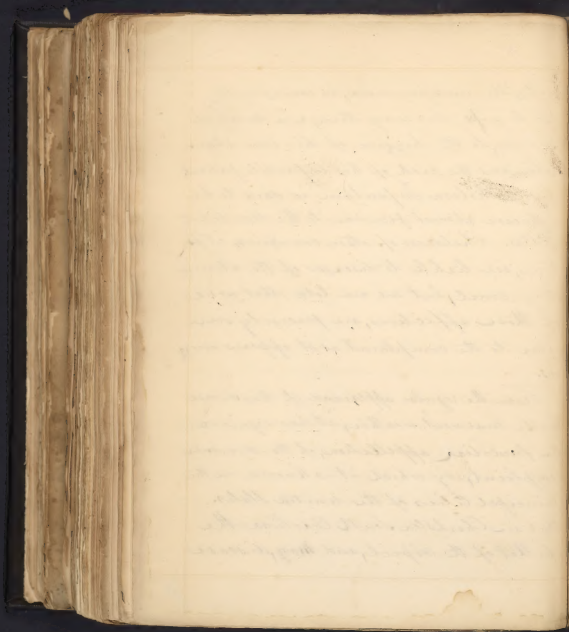
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with, the inexperienced, is consequently left to grope his way through a mist of theories, to the hazard of his own character, and the risk of his infantile patients.

Cholera Infantum is said to be a disease almost peculiar to the United States. Children of other countries, it is true, are liable to diseases of the alimentary canal, but we are told that none of those affections, are precisely similar to the complaint as it appears among us.

From the regular appearance of this disease in the warmest weather, it has acquired the familiar appellation, of the summer complaint, by which it is known in the principal Cities of the United States.

But in Charleston South Carolina the epithet of the April, and May, disease



has been given to it, as we are told it makes its attack principally in those months. It prevails in this City (Philadelphia) from the first of July, until near the twentieth of September, though it sometimes shows itself earlier, and continues later. Children from the third or fourth week, until the second year of their age, are its usual subjects, & its violence, and danger, are in proportion to the severity of the heat, or other exciting cause. A few days warm weather, says Dr Parrish, in his lectures on this subject, will produce the disease, whilst as many cold ones will prevent the occurrence of any new cases, and mitigate the symptoms of those already produced.

The following interesting statement

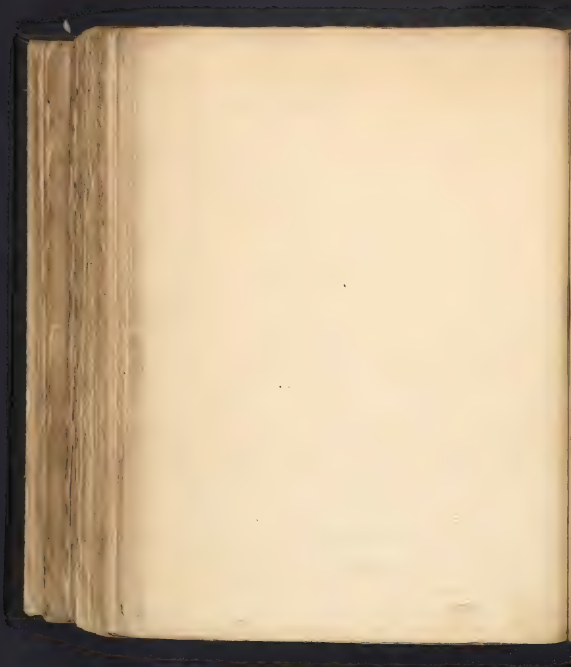
made by Dr Parrish will give the mean heat and number of deaths from Cholera Infantum in this City, for several years—
 - From the latter part of May, till the latter part of August, in 1818 the mean heat was 77° the number of deaths 144—
 - in 1819 the mean heat was 78° the deaths 170. — in 1820 mean heat 78° ; deaths 202— in 1821 mean heat 77° ; deaths 138— in 1822 mean heat 77° ; deaths 193. — in 1823 mean heat 76° and deaths 206.

Although the writers on this subject, as far at least as I have had an opportunity of knowing, have considered Cholera Infantum, as a disease entirely of large Cities, and confined places, and to be cured in almost all instances by the pure, and refreshing air, of the

country, yet the great wealth, & some of our
practices, compels us to believe that
it, frequently makes its appearance in
diarrhoea, and other wise healthy, affec-
tions in the country, and that under
those circumstances cures are effected
by a removal to the country.

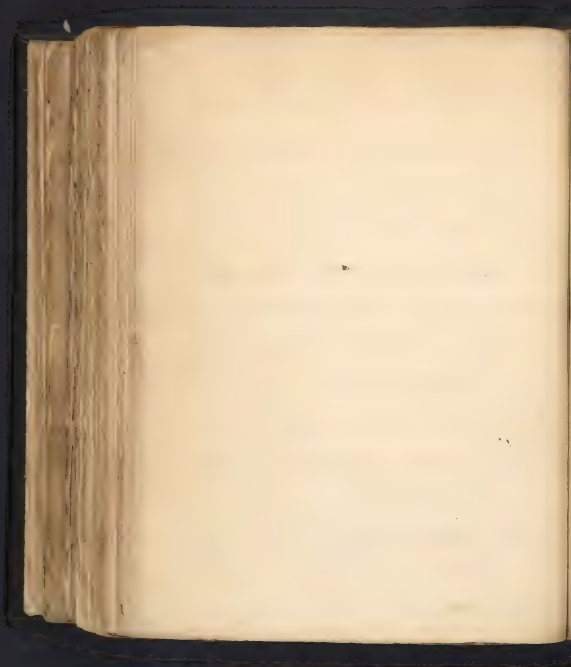
The most common, and serious, cause,
in this disease is the nervous, and neural,
disposition, in large cities, which act-
ing facilitates the tender infant, and
brings the system to the most perfect
operation of the existing causes. Among
these last, are generally named, crude and
indigestible substances, and other injurious articles
of diet, together with improper clothing.

It is also said to be brought on and ag-
gravated, by worms, ventilation, &c. &c. which
may account in some degree for it, ap.



appearance in the more healthy parts of the country.

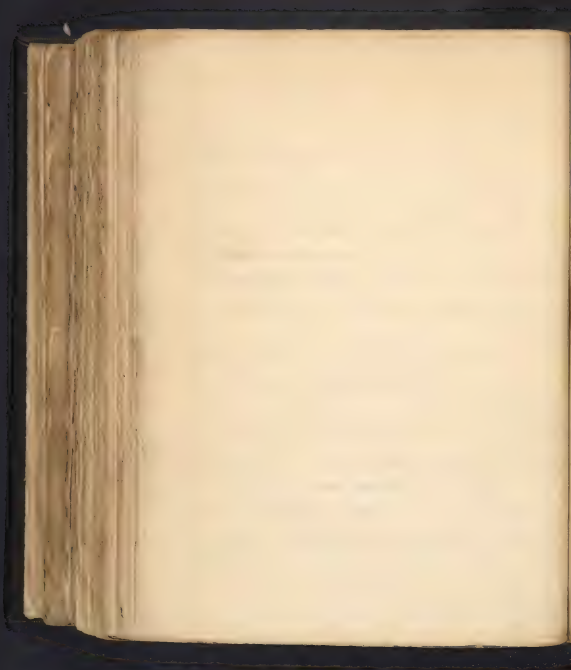
The appearances upon dissection, prove that the contents of the thorax are not in the least degree affected, and that it is upon the abdominal viscera, and the organs, that the disease seems to expand its ravages. The mucous membrane of the alimentary canal, seems to be the principal seat of the disease, this being ascertained by the appearance of dark blood spots, especially in the stomach, and duodenum. Occasionally the peritoneum assumes the same appearance. As we would naturally suppose, the liver is most commonly considerably affected, being increased in size and firmness. Sometimes it is indurated, with the gall bladder filled with bile very much altered from its natural consistency.



condition. The spleen and pancreas are
sometimes involved in the diseased action.

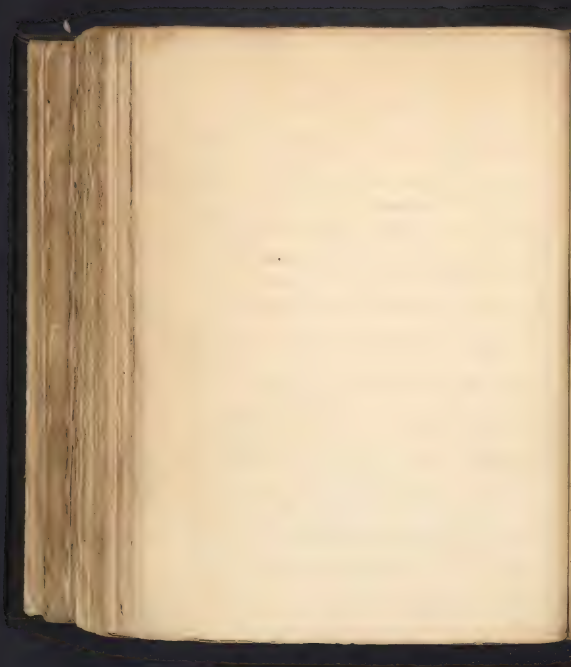
Conjoining the principal causes
and symptoms of Cholera Infantum, with
the appearances upon dissection, it may
be clearly inferred, that it is a gastric
disease, bearing a close affinity to the Cholera
Morbus, from which it chiefly differs in at-
tacking infants, whilst the latter is in-
cident to more advanced life.

Cholera Infantum, first discovers
itself, by a shrunken appearance of the cheeks,
pallid countenance, and other signs of
debility, which symptoms are generally
soon followed, either by a diarrhea, or
by a violent vomiting and burning with
a high fever. The matter discharged from
the stomach, is generally yellow or green
whilst the stools are slimy and bloody.



without any tincture of bile. In some
cases they present a curdy appearance, but
in others they are nearly as limpid as water.
Stools are frequently discharged in the
course of the disease. Considerable pain
attends the first stage, which is manifest
by the patients dwelling up their
feet and never appearing easy in position.

The pulse is quick and weak. The heat
unusually warm, whilst the extremities
retain their natural heat & incline to
be cold. The accompanying fever is of
the remittent kind, with its principal
exacerbations towards evening. The affec-
tion of the head is sometimes so violent
as to produce considerable delirium. A
distressing thirst usually attends the
disease. The stools which take place
throughout the disease are frequently



large and fatal.

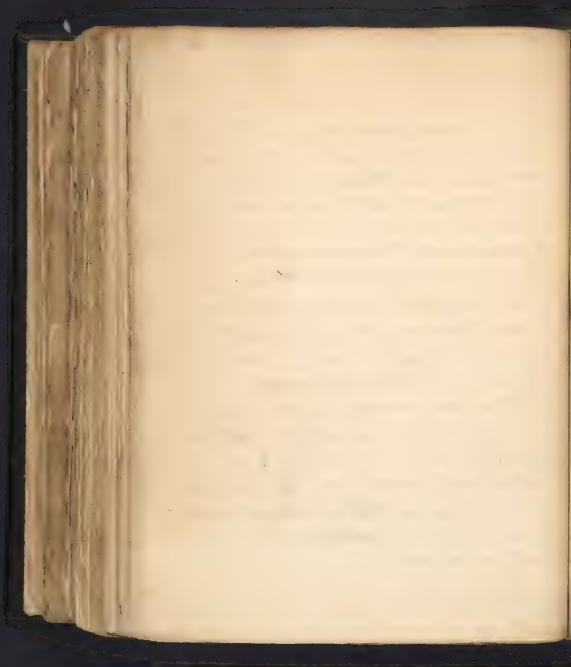
The symptomatic eruptions are the disease being of long duration and attended with great morbid action, dark spots upon the skin, a soreness of the mouth, irregular, convulsions and finally, that peculiar and striking expression of countenance denominated *facies hippocratica*.

In regard to the most proper treatment of Cholera infanticum, there appears to be a great variety of opinion. Some still judge that there is no inflammation and of course no necessity for using the lancet, or other depleting means; while on the contrary, others of equal respectability & authority assert, that it is in all cases an inflammatory disease and to be treated in the first instance by antiphlogistic measures. Under such circumstances it is diffi-



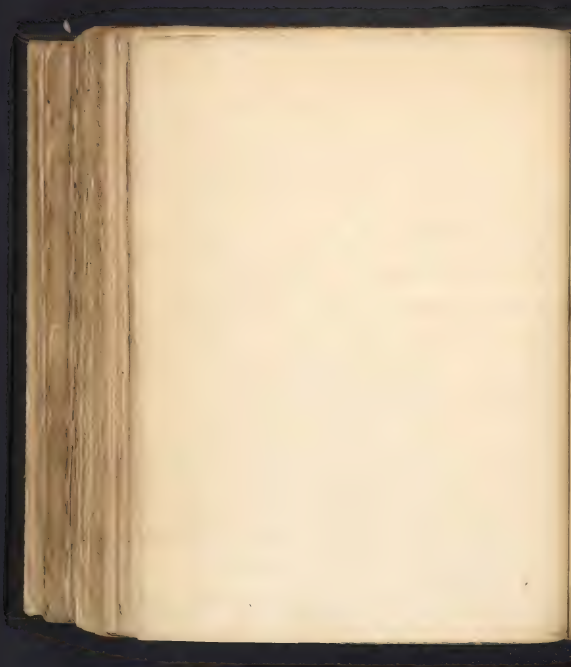
= all for one devoid of much experience to see the most proper course. Without therefore depending upon the comparative merits of either side of the question, I shall proceed to state the treatment I should be led to adopt from a view of the practice of those upon whose judgment I can rely with confidence.

It is confessed by those conversant in the treatment of this disease, that in many cases unless the cause be removed, (which is to be done by changing a vitiated City, for a pure country air,) all remedies are utterly devoid of utility. When poverty or other circumstances prevent a visit to the country during the attack upon the tender frame, then it is that the skill of the Physician, is most urgently required.

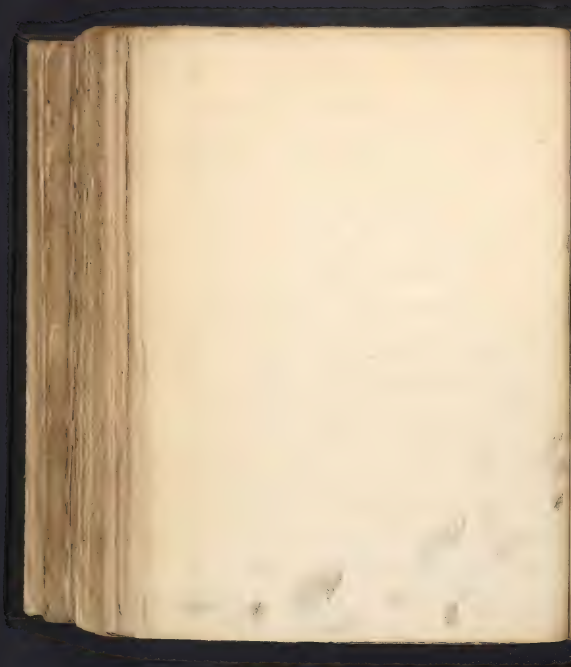


The disease being seated principally in the intestines it would naturally appear that we should first direct our attention to the evacuation of their irritating contents, as a means of restoring them to their healthy condition.

For this purpose Castor oil is recommended, and in mild cases it will be particularly applicable. — But where there is so great a degree of irritability of the stomach as not to retain sincerely any thing together with an elevation of pulse, with a hot dry skin, we should, as in almost all these old complaints, if of inflammatory nature have recourse to depletion with the Venust, ^{or} opposite. In conjunction with this practice, we must not neglect the warm bath andyne in-



jections, and for relating to the epigastricum. When this practice has been used to the proper extent we may have recourse to purgatives. For this purpose a variety of medicines have been highly recommended. Dr Parikh states, that he has used the syrup of Rheubarb with decidedly beneficial effects. The late Dr Miller of New York has recommended with the same intention, one sixth of a grain of calomel, given every half hour or hour until the stools become natural. Later experience in this city affords reason to believe, that for this purpose no prescription is so decidedly advantageous, as a combination of calomel and opium. Over other purgatives it possesses the important advantages of being insipid

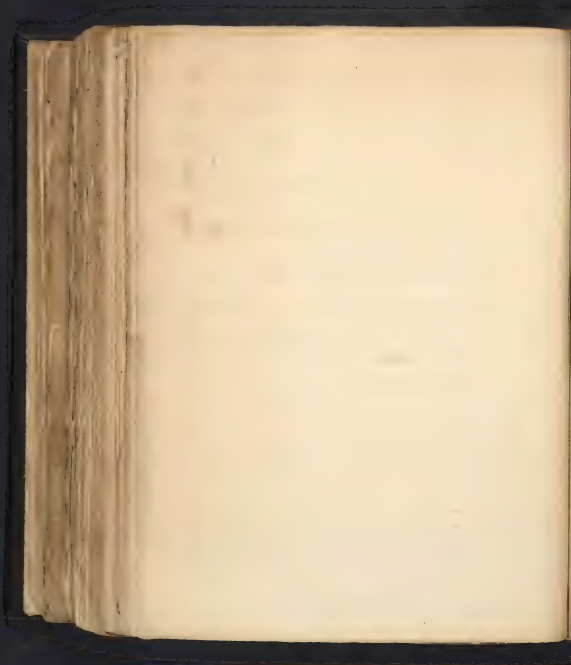


small in bulk, and in consequence of
 its great specific gravity not liable to
 be rejected by vomiting. This prac-
 tice though well suited to most cases
 is not adapted to all, for there are
 some in which the gastric distress
 is so vehement that purgatives cannot
 be used at all. — Such cases are dis-
 tinguished by violent vomiting, thirst,
 quick inextinguishable pulse, hot skin, and
 other severe symptoms. Under these
 circumstances emetics of species have
 been recommended. These we
 have reason to suspect the existence
 of inflammation. This practice is
 highly esteemed, its effect, being to
 determine the circulating fluids, from
 the interior to the surface and thus
 restore a healthy action. If the emetic



of spicaccharum should not be considered
a proper article for administration owing
to excessive irritability of the stomach,
the vomiting may be promoted by the
administration of mild delicious drinks,
such as weak infusion of ~~gum~~ ^{gum} mastic
followed by acid water &c.

The stomach being nicely well
cleared of its offensive contents, we should di-
rect our attention to the allaying the irri-
tability of that organ, which is to be done
by milk and some water in teaspoonfull
doses. For the same purpose, the spirits
of orange juice has been recommended in do-
ses of from ten to thirty drops according
to the age of the patient, to be repeated
three or four times in the course of the day.
To this treatment may be added, a blis-
ter over the region of the stomach, or



in milder cases the application of a warm poultice of hops or flannel's wet with warm spirits will often answer the same purpose.

Should we immediately after having checked the vomiting proceed in the evacuation of the alimentary canal. I am disposed to think, that we should prostrate our little patient, already much enfeebled, as to induce a state of debility, totally irreparable. I am therefore inclined to believe, that we should not proceed to further alimentary evacuations until we have overpowered the system with mild sedentive images.

Having thus prepared the stomach and system generally, we now resort to the use of opium and opium, and this may be persisted in until the bowels are thin

thoroughly cleansed of bile or other offensive matter, but I hold these irritating accumulations to be the source of great mischief. - In our intestinal evacuations we must proceed with caution, observing always the degree of prostration existing from such practice. When our purges seem to be too debilitating, we should omit them for an interval, and recur again to them, when the occasion may seem proper. Thus, by attending purging, with slightly tonic & astringent medicines we shall support our patient from the fatal effects of too great prostration.

Should the disease become chronic, attended with evacuations of dark coloured offensive matter, Dr Robert Jackson has recommended, almost as a specific, a combination of charcoal,

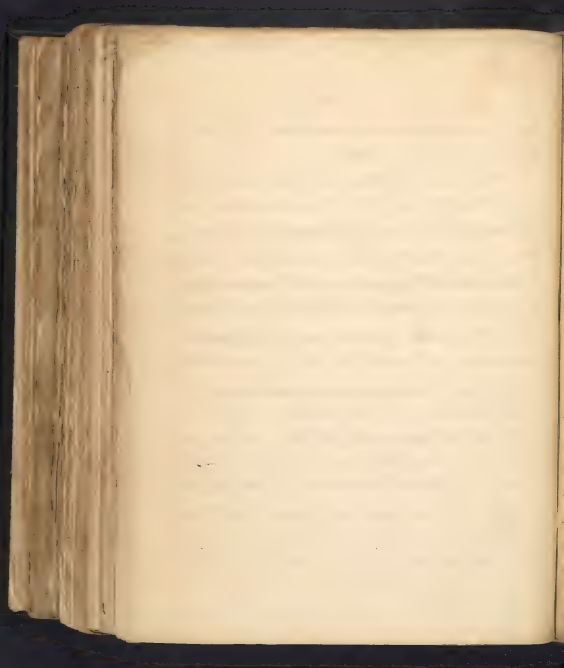
rhubarb, and Spicacuanha, repeated every two or three hours, as may be required. When we have pushed well evacuation in a secondary case, we should in the next place have recourse to these medicines, which have the double effect of determining to the surface, and allaying morbid action.

For this purpose the most popular, and I believe the best, prescription, consists of Spicacuanha, calomel and opium, which may be mixed in such proportions as will enable them to keep the bowels loose, allay spasmodic uneasiness, and determine distinctly to the surface.

When the disease is attended with copious evacuations, together with violent pain and irritation the proper

visitors may be used. These should be
large and applied to the stomach & loins,
in all the circumstances mentioned.
The feet and legs are to be kept warm
by wearing stockings, large enough
to reach above the knee, should be put on,
and the child allowed the benefit of
the cold air.

Thus we are informed by the
physicians that we have observed the
symptoms and checked the tendency
to inflammation, evinced the
state and forced a reaction in the
fluids, in order to prevent the
state of the stomach which
is so inevitable a complication which
must be avoided, and which
is a great source of irritation. We
must prevent its occurrence. The
following directions have been recom-



suggested by most writers, for the removal of these symptoms. In the same manner, and with similar views, the vegetable astringents and tonics, as recommended the preceding writer, have not been so here, in their power, and, just this, been highly extolled.

In those cases attended with tormina and tenesmus with the symptoms, just enumerated, viz incontinence, and debility of the stomach, we may use with success in most cases a combination of Rhenubarb, magnesia and Castoreum. Anodynes in solution, repeated occasionally, are also highly recommended.

In the latter stages of Cholera infantum, after the acute symptoms have subsided, a profuse diarrhoea

almost always attend, and demand con-
 siderable attention. For the shocking of this dis-
 -ease numerous medicines have been
 employed, among which, are alum, cre-
 -taceous salerne columbo, chalk, in-
 -fusion of galls, and tincture of kino.

A very favourite prescription with
 Doctor Sympson, is the logwood, in
 infusion, giving a desert spoonfull
 every two or three hours.

Dr Chapman, in his lectures, speaks very
 highly of a strong decoction of the de-
 -berry root of our country. This article
 he has used for several years, and with
 very beneficial effects. He describes
 it as the most officinal astringent,
 in this disease, with which he is ac-
 -quainted, resting easily on the stomach,
 and producing a cure in many cases by

a few doses. He further states that after a short use, laxatives are sometimes required for the purpose of removing constipation. If a deviation made by adding a pint of boiling water to one ounce of the Quinine Tonic, the ordinary dose is a desert spoonful repeated according to circumstances.

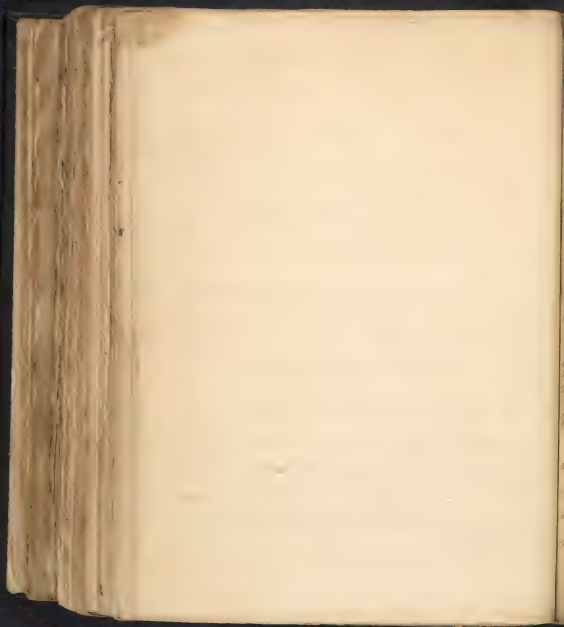
During this period of the disease, should there be great prostration, with aphthæ of the mouth, medicine, which have a tendency to corroborate the system should be used as lime water in bark or the bark jacket, oxidized lemon juice, given cold, has also been recommended as an efficient remedy. Rinsing the mouth with a solution of such lozels of soda, will in most cases remove the aphthæ.

During convalescence the patient should

be qualified in any kind of food the appetite may crave; for it has been observed, that, in this state of the disease, when the child has been supplied with those nourishments, which it seemed particularly to desire, its recovery was very much accelerated. A desire for all meats is always a most favourable indication, and the patient should never be deprived from any time whatever.

The diet if not contra indicated, by the signs of the patient, should generally consist of soups, beef-tea, and the essence of beef. Milk punch is also very good.

He should walk or ride, a short distance beyond the outskirts of the city at least once a day, and should lodge in the most elevated and best ventilated apartment in the house.



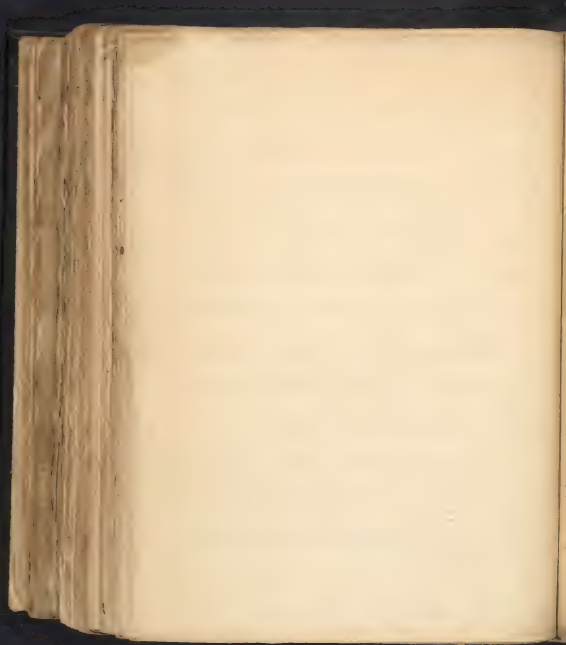
His clothing should consist of flannel,
properly adjusted, and kept clean.

A flannel collar around the abdomen
retains this, as well as in almost all, bene-
ficial complaints is a beneficial agent.

It prevents the recurrence of being obliged
to re-stage in the house.

I have now been
over the matter many times
in relation to the
institutions, and it is intended for
those cases, by the way, in some of the
circumstances, cannot afford the ben-
efits of a long residence. The
high the practice is in most cases com-
paratively trifling, and any thing
being necessary, more than to "raise the
paw, and send the patient to the country."

I must here very soon to remark



that covering the face in the case of stupor &
 thirdly the patient should be kept in a quiet
 position; and in the case of delirium
 holding the ears instead of having them
 they should be kept open. & the patient
 held in should be obliged to move their
 arms & legs, stimulating the intellect in
 the skin & thus the stomach and bowels.

In convulsions & during more de-
 siccative than convulsive it may be well for
 this purpose to mention that those who
 may be a violence subject to cholera
 Infantina should —

1st lie down during the day, and lodge
 at night on a mattress on the most airy
 and cooler of floors.

2^d they should use the cold bath with
 a brackish water not only twice a day
 but in it shock upon the legs

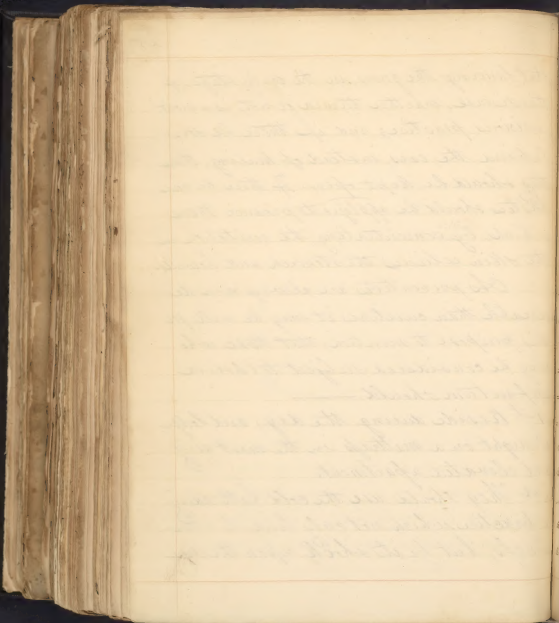


tem, preserves undisturbed the relation between the skin and alimentary canal.

The plunging bath is the best, and the patient should recover from the first shock, before he is subjected to the second.

Good attention should be paid to the dress of children, which should be adapted to the state and changes of the atmosphere. Flannel, next the skin, makes the best dress.

4th The diet should be particularly attended to. If the child has not been weaned, (and weaning it is thought predisposes to Cholera,) the mother's milk is its best nourishment. For the first few months, after the child may have been weaned, the most proper food is milk, and some of the pure farinaceous vegetables, as arrow root, tapioca, or



household victuals, made by boiling, pounded crackers in milk, salt meat, and salt fish, are also considered very serviceable.

5th During dentition, a strict attention should be paid to the state of the gums, and if found tumid, or inflamed, lancing will be necessary.

6th Removal to the country is always of primary importance.

Fredericksburg

Virginia

